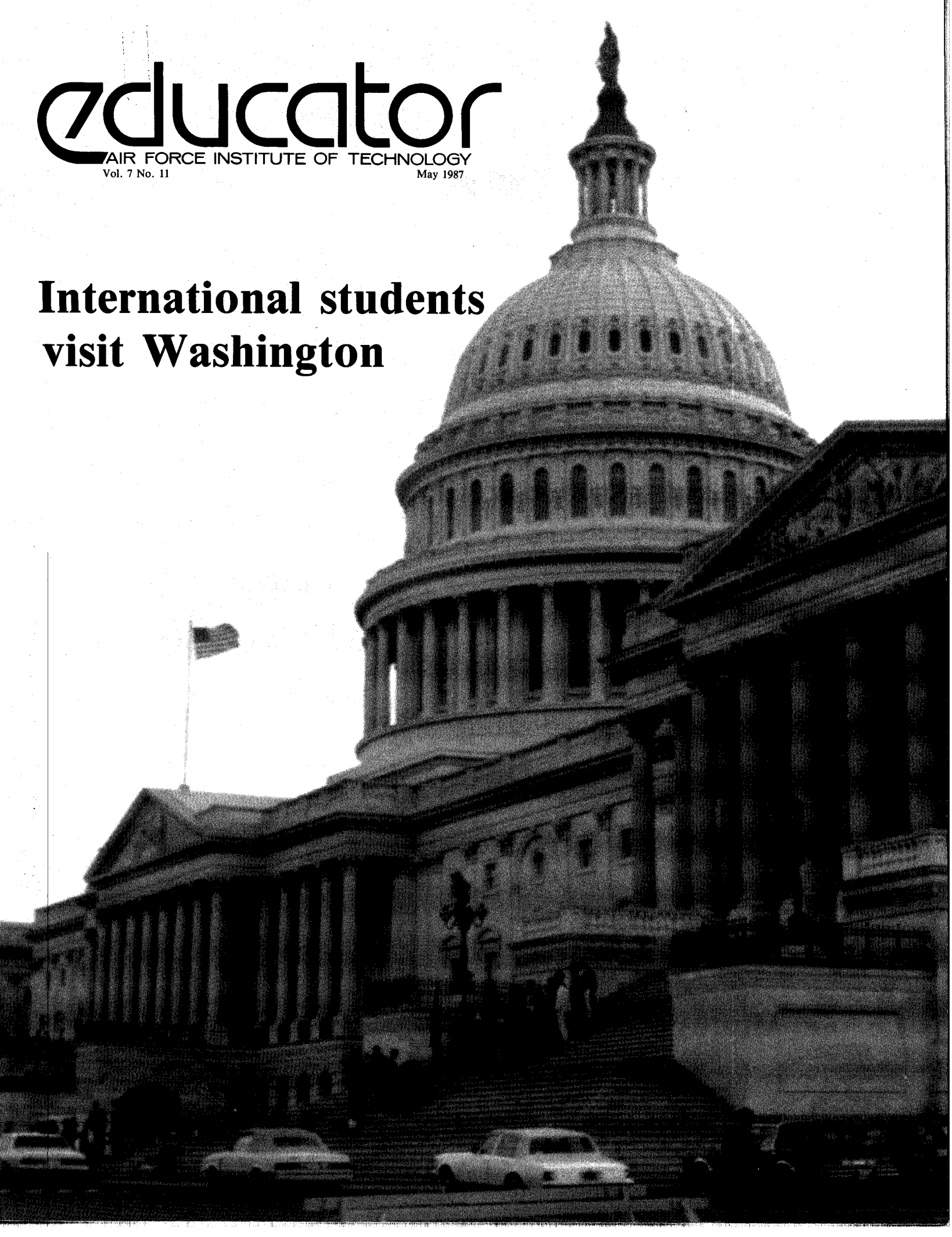


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International students visit Washington



They come to Wright-Patterson from countries around the world. They are the pride of their country and are some of the brightest officers in the military. They are AFIT's

International Students

by SrA David W. Honchul
AFIT Public Affairs

Washington — "Macy dribbles around the screen. He pulls up, three-pointer, good! The Pacers regain the lead."

"The 36 columns of the Lincoln Memorial represent the 36 states while he was president."

"This painting, created in the early 19th Century, depicts medieval life in Western Europe."

These statements seem unrelated, and put together, just plain gobbledygook. However, to an international officer attending classes at the Air Force Institute of Technology, these statements are just a sampling of what one might learn outside the classroom.

Informational Programs, as established by the Department of Defense, is part of the training international students receive while in the United States. The program at AFIT is managed by the International Training Management Office.

"There is a lot of emphasis put on this program," 2nd Lt. Bill Hall, international training management officer, said. "This program is the main vehicle the international students have to experience the diversities of the United States, whether it is recreational, educational, political or judicial."

The training office at AFIT assists about 25 to 45 international students and their families annually. Australia, Canada, Korea, Pakistan, Spain and Egypt are just a few of the countries who purchase training at AFIT, as well as other bases in the United States. The

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Korean air force Maj. Yong Sang Kim takes a photo of fellow countryman Capt. Jong Hee Lee outside of the White House in Washington. The two Korean students were among the 13 AFIT international students to tour Washington recently.



Squadron Leaders Geoffrey Tasker (l) and John Quinn (r), Australian students at AFIT, and a Turkish officer attending courses at Brooks AFB, Texas, look on during the changing of the guard at the tomb of the unknown soldier in Arlington National Cemetery.

'Trouble-shooting' one role of international training office

by SrA David W. Honchul
AFIT Public Affairs

"Merhaba."

One might hear this friendly Turkish greeting as passing the halls near the International Training Management Office at the Air Force Institute of Technology. Although international students attending AFIT speak English, other problems can develop leaving officers or their families lost, not knowing what to do.

That's when the International Training Management Office steps in. The office, located in the Institute's Directorate of Admissions, is a friend the officers can turn to in troubled times.

"We run interference for any problems they may have, whether it's financial, personal or educational," said 2nd Lt. Bill Hall, international training management officer at AFIT. "I think the knowledge that we are here (the lieutenant and his assistant, SSgt. Marvin Davis) provides them with a sense of security. They can look to us as a 'trouble-shooting' center."

Each year, allied countries throughout the world purchase training from the United States under the Security Assistance Program. These purchases are made through Foreign Military Sales or International Military and Educational Training funding. Of that training, degree programs at the Institute are frequently purchased to help enhance their officer's knowledge in state-of-the-art techniques. Once a country expresses an interest in AFIT, the international training office gets involved.

"We coordinate all requests for academic evaluation from prospective international students with our schools and their country's training departments. Once evaluations are completed, eligible applicant's training departments request program quotas from the Foreign Military Training Affairs Group at Randolph AFB, Texas," Lieutenant Hall said. The lieutenant added that during those evaluations, the schools ensure that each officer is highly qualified for the program. One of the many problems that could exist is an international officer arrives needing additional undergraduate credits in some academic areas.

"When I arrived at AFIT, I lacked some courses I needed for my program," said Squadron Leader Salman Absar, an air force officer from Pakistan. "AFIT didn't offer the

courses, so Lieutenant Hall helped me enroll at Wright State University where I could complete my requirements for my degree."

"The international officers are our responsibility from the moment they arrive until they leave," Sergeant Davis remarked. "We will meet them at the airport, get them settled in and help them find the necessities they need. That includes helping them buy a car, if they need one."

"When they depart, it's the opposite routine. If they have bought some furniture or a car, we will help them sell everything they can't take with them. We will also help them process out of the unit and we'll see them off at the airport. With all the interaction that we have with them, when they depart, it's like watching a good friend leave."

"Every state-side base has a person designated as the international training officer, whether it is their full-time job or an additional duty," the lieutenant said. "However, AFIT is a unique situation. When international students come to AFIT, they are usually here about one-and-a-half to two years. Many bases experience anywhere from one- to eight-week turnaround in their international students. With that short duration, they don't have the same opportunity to get to know them and their families as personally as we do."

"Within boundaries, we maintain a professional relationship with them," the training officer stated. "However, with the nature and frequency of activities we do, it's hard not to become friends with the students and their families."

And, the students agree.

"Because of the closeness of my country to the United States, I really haven't had any problems," Capt. Real Palardy, an air force officer from Canada, said. "However, if anything should happen, I know I can count on Sergeant Davis or Lieutenant Hall. They are friends, not only to me, but to all the international students."

"Bill and Marvin have been really good with helping my family," said Warren Wood, an Australian governmental employee. "They are there when we need them."

Not only are friendships developed between the training office and the students, but also among the students themselves.

"Unfortunately, perceptions are often based on misinformation and perpetuated by unfamiliarity," Lieutenant Hall said. "I think while they (international officers) are here — and we have activities together as a group — everyone gets to know each other on a personal basis. This type of environment is extremely conducive to dispelling preconceived stereotypes and allows friendships to develop."

"No longer is it 'that Air Force officer' or 'those people from such-and-such country,'" the lieutenant continued. "Everyone relates to each other. I've learned bits of their languages, and I will use them when I can. It surprises new international officers, when I meet them, to be greeted in their own language. I'm sure the students have acquired bits of our American culture as well."

"Hence, the importance of the Security Assistance Training Program," Lieutenant Hall continued. "The ideals, attitudes and beliefs witnessed by the officers, while in the United States, will be carried home and may ultimately be reflected in their country's decisions on world matters."

"This is one of the most self-satisfying jobs an Air Force officer could ask for because it offers the opportunity to help people and develop international friendships," Lieutenant Hall said. "We try to make their experience at AFIT as rewarding as possible. Hopefully, that feeling is mutual."

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countries pay for the training through one of two funding programs — Foreign Military Sales or International Military and Educational Training.

"Built into the training costs priced to foreign countries is a 1 to 3 percent amount that is earmarked for Informational Program activities," the lieutenant said. "This money pays all the student's admission fees, meals and transportation expenses on tours. If our students bring their families, they are responsible for their dependents' expenses."

Under the program, the Defense Department has set down 12 objectives that the lieutenant's office must strive to fulfill. The objectives aim to show diversities of American life and culture that the international officer may not have seen before.

"Although, by the regulation, dependents are of secondary consideration in planning activities, we must be aware of their desires and availability to attend," Lieutenant Hall stated. "We try to combine educational with recreational activities to increase our participation by the officers and their families. This sometimes makes it difficult to meet all 12 of the prescribed objectives because of the age constraints placed on us by some organizations when touring their facilities."

To help AFIT, and other bases as



Jack Smith, a volunteer tour guide at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, points out landmarks that are located near the center to the group.

well, to meet the objectives they may not be able to meet, the Foreign Military Training Affairs Group, the organization that regulates the international training program, helps organize one major trip — a trip to Washington, D.C.

"There is an office, under the foreign training group, in Washington that is devoted to organizing the D.C. trip

itinerary," the lieutenant said. "This shows the emphasis that the group places on this tour. The purpose of the tour is to give the international officers a deeper understanding and appreciation of the United States and to acquaint them with some of the functions of our national government."

The trip from AFIT is taken annually, the most recent of which saw 13 international officers, some bringing their dependents, spend five days exploring the city.

"The Washington trip is the highlight of their year," the lieutenant said. "I've been asked many times by our students 'when is the Washington trip?' They have heard about the trip from former students and friends. Being our nation's capitol, Washington possesses important aspects of our government and history that are instrumental in understanding the United States and our people."

The busy itinerary the students kept took them from the Air and Space Museum to the "whispering chamber" of the Capitol Building; from the many monuments and memorials around the Mall to the changing of the guard at the tomb of the unknown soldier; from George Washington's home at Mount Vernon to the historic inner-harbor of Baltimore.

"I really wanted to see Washington," Maj. Yong Sang Kim, a Korean air force officer, said. "The United States



Australian Squadron Leader Geoffrey Tasker and his wife, Helen, read an inscription on a monument in the Franciscan Monastery gardens in Washington.

is known for Washington. This trip allowed me to see much of the city that otherwise I might not have been able to do on my own."

"We usually tour on our own," said Squadron Leader John Quinn, an Australian air force officer. "However, this trip is very well planned. It provides us with an opportunity and a way of seeing the major sites of Washington."

"This trip allows me to learn more about the United States," said Squadron Leader Salman Absar, an air force officer from Pakistan. "It let me see things that, before, I had only read about."

One highlight of the trip for the officers was a luncheon in their honor at the Fort Meade Officers' Club. Air Force officials, who work in international programs at the Pentagon, and officials from the international officers' Washington embassies were in attendance.

"Many of the officers got the chance to talk with their embassy representatives at the luncheon," Lieutenant Hall said. "It gave our students an opportunity to discuss issues concerning their home countries as well as their AFIT programs. Later that afternoon,



Squadron Leader John Quinn talks with Air Commodore Fred Freeman (r), an official from the Australian embassy in Washington, at a luncheon held at the Fort Meade, Md., Officers' Club.



International students were special guests at a luncheon hosted by Air Force officials at the Fort Meade, Md., Officers' Club. Embassy officials from the students' countries were also on hand to talk with their countrymen.

some of the officers went to their embassies to visit with their officials."

Trip reports are required by the foreign training group from all organizations visiting Washington. "They (Foreign Military Training Affairs Group) utilize these reports as feedback for consideration of future trips. When considering all the Informational Program activities we accomplish during the course of the year, Washington represents the singlemost educational and recreational experience our students will have during their AFIT tenure."